

Spring brings progress to OT grounds

Spring arrived in Southeast Iowa with a welcome stretch of beautiful weather, and the Old Threshers grounds quickly came to life. Warm sunshine and mild temperatures provided ideal conditions for several improvement projects to move forward.

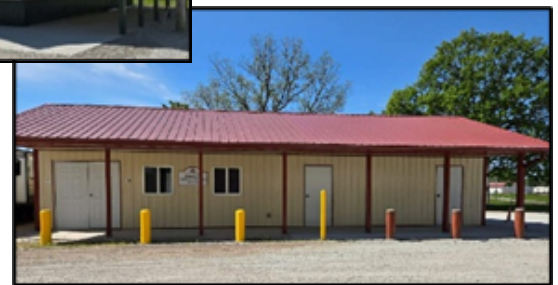
One of the most noticeable projects is the construction of a brand-new bathroom and shower house near what many know as the Bus Gate during Reunion time (top right.) This addition will provide a much-needed convenience for visitors and campers in that area of the grounds and features a second story for storage.

Another important improvement was added to the west end of the D. P. Wilson EMS Pavilion (right,) where a new bank of accessible bathrooms has been added. These facilities will help make the south end of the grounds more comfortable and convenient for all who visit.



Left: New restroom and shower facility near the Bus Gate.

Below: Accessible restrooms added to the EMS building.



Signs of spring can be seen everywhere. The grass is green and growing, giving the grounds a fresh, inviting look after the long winter months. That same renewed energy carried into the season's first educational events.

Steam School weekend once again helped kick off the season, and the weather could not have been better. (See page 5.)

Elsewhere on the grounds, concrete was poured east of Museum B for the steam roller printing demonstration area (left.) The new pad will give the Printers' Hall and Traction Steam Area a solid, durable space for this popular demonstration.

School Tours were also a tremendous success this spring, with more than 1,000 students visiting the grounds. (See page 6.)

With strong progress on construction projects, successful educational events, and the beauty of spring all around, Old Threshers is off to an outstanding start in 2026.

A Message from the CEO

2026 Is Off and Running....

Old Threshers began early this year moving forward on improvements around the grounds. "Thanks Mother Nature." The much earlier than usual warmer weather allowed things to start rolling in March. Here are a few of the improvements so far:

- Two new restroom facilities on grounds
- New Entrance to the General Store in the North Village
- New Front Doors for the Church in the North Village
- Concrete Pad for Steam Roller Printing Area
- Camper Parker Building Preparations
- Landscaping at Santa House
- Lighting updates around the grounds



Terry McWilliams

All great improvements to our grounds and facilities with more to come by the time the Old Threshers Reunion starts. Thank you to all who have supported these improvements through your volunteer work or your financial support. We can't do it without all of you.

As we look ahead into this year's programs and events for the season, Old Threshers will need to prepare for the potential challenges that we will be facing. Will the potential for rising costs, concerns in our country and around the world play a role in your summer plans? Gas as an example: what will that do to your plans for attending things with the family this year? Old Threshers strives to continually make its museums, events, amenities and attractions family-affordable so more families and visitors can enjoy them.

So, this year when the family stays close to home for things to do because prices are rising, remember:

- Always check your own backyard for things to do first, perhaps hidden treasures that we all forget about.
- Henry County has eight museums, outdoor activities, and many yearly attractions and events.
- Kids 10 and under are FREE to the Old Threshers Reunion.
- Old Threshers camping rates are lower than the national average.
- Kids 10 and under are FREE when visiting the Heritage Museums and the Theatre Museum with a paid admission this summer, seven days week.
- \$5.00 (per person) admission to visit the Heritage Museums or \$8.00 (per person) to visit both Heritage and the Theatre Museums.
- \$15.00 (per person) One Day Admission to the Old Threshers Reunion (includes the concert that evening.)
- \$40.00 (per person) 5-Day Reunion Admission (includes the 4 nightly concerts), that's only \$8 per day!
- Family-affordable Halloween activities
- \$10.00 for a carload at the Festival of Lights.

The Old Threshers Board tries to pack as much value as possible into admission prices at our events. The Heritage Museums show how important is to preserve our agricultural heritage. The Reunion has over 100 daily activities listed in the daily program. The Festival of Lights is one of the longest drive-through light displays in the state. Old Threshers wants to be, and will strive to be, your venue for activities, events, programs and the place where you make family memories that last a life time.

"Coming Together is a beginning; Keeping together is progress; Working together is success."

Thank you ahead of time, to all of you for supporting Old Threshers once again this year. I look forward to seeing you soon at the Old Threshers Reunion Sept. 3-7, 2026.



CELEBRATING AMERICA **250** *Midwest
Old Threshers Reunion*



THURS., SEPT. 3



FRI., SEPT. 4



SAT., SEPT. 5



SUN., SEPT. 6

**GRANDSTAND OPENS AT 6:30 PM
SHOW STARTS AT 8:00 PM
INCLUDED WITH YOUR ADMISSION.**

John Deere 620 restored to its original glory

by Keaton Philips



Decades ago, Sidney Johnston bought a new John Deere 620 as a workhorse for the farm. It was eventually replaced by a John Deere 4020 bought new by his son, Melvin.

Melvin, my wife's grandfather, was a farmer and cattleman south of Packwood, Iowa. In 2020, he sadly passed away from Covid.

Retirement still wasn't easy on the old tractor having been married to a feed wagon for as long as my wife could remember. Her grandmother (Wilma, pictured above) approached me one day in 2024 saying she'd love to have it restored. We made a deal, she'd pay for the parts to restore it and I would do the work.

I started the tear down two months before our second son was born (a mistake I'll never make again.) The tractor ran really well. Melvin was a stickler on maintenance, but cosmetic-wise the tractor was in sad shape. The years of dirt was so caked on, it was as if it were concrete. We had our second son in September of 2024 and no progress was made for six months or so.

Finally, I was making progress on it, working during nap times and after the kids were asleep. My dad helped me do the painting on what was the last nice October day we had. I am by no means a body man so a special thank you to Hellweg Ag Repair and Restoration of Fairfield, Iowa, and Gary Helterbran of Hillsboro, Iowa, are in order for how good the hood and nose cone look.

Slowly everything went back together with the occasional hiccup here and there. The tractor was revealed to Wilma on January 24, 2026. One of Wilma's biggest fears was what would someday happen to the one family tractor. I think it's safe to say the tractor will stay in the family, our boys and nephew being the 5th generations to enjoy the old tractor.

If you have a restoration story to share, email otchaff@oldthreshers.org. Feel free to share pictures with a brief story of your project.

STEAM SCHOOL 2026

Steam School weekend always kicks off the spring season.

The weather could not have been better, making it easy for participants to learn hands-on how to safely operate a traction steam engine.

Thank you to the volunteer engineers who put their engines together, some for the first time in 2026, and allowed Steam School participants the opportunity to operate several different types of steam engines, including the upright Herschell-Spillman engine that runs the carousel.

Thank you to our instructors, Jay Sigafoose and Frank Thorp for spending their weekend passing on their knowledge.



2026 SCHOOL TOURS

The 2026 School Tour season was a great success, with more than 1,000 students visiting the grounds. Their excitement, curiosity, and eagerness to learn made every day worthwhile and reminded everyone of the importance of sharing agricultural history with the next generation.

Teaching history the hands-on way, our school tour volunteers help spark curiosity and bring the past to life for the next generation. Thank you for inspiring young minds year after year.

School Tour participants learned what going to school in a one-room schoolhouse was like. They learned about the evolution of agriculture and how farmers went from horses to steam engines to gas tractors. They also got to watch how flour is made at the Marvin Mill and how type is set and newspapers printed while touring Printers' Hall.

Old Threshers isn't all steam engines and trolleys. Students got a brief history of dolls as well as automobiles.



GREATER IOWA SWAP MEET & FLEA MARKET

The line of vendors for the 2026 Greater Iowa Swap Meet & Flea Market May 23-24, snaked its way through the campground prior to set up Thursday evening. Vendor traffic is routed through the campground to keep the city streets along McMillan Park from being too congested.

Those wanting to sell their wares have a choice between a covered spot under the Wright Pavillion, or an outside spot along the gravel roads of McMillan Park. Inside spots sell out quickly. There one will find things like Matchbox cars, handmade items, vinyl records and more.

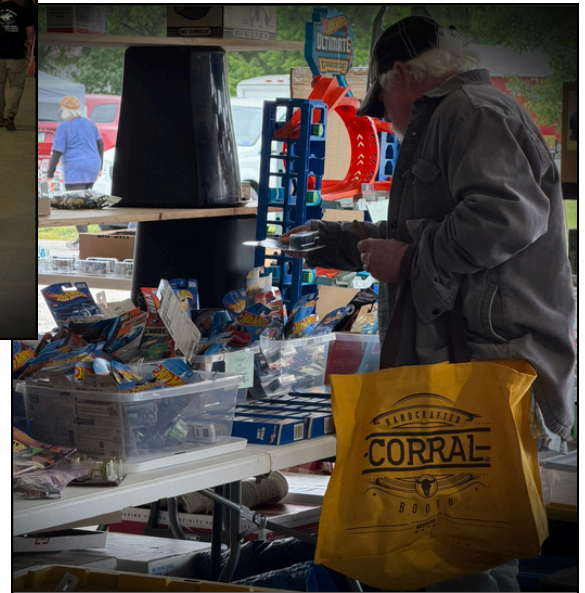
If tractor parts, tools, yard decor, gas engines or other old iron is more your style, vendors set up outside is where you wanted to look.

The Mt. Pleasant Kiwanis was there with pancakes and coffee to get the day started. The OT Pork Shop kept people fed the rest of the time. Throw in some kettlecorn and other snacks and it was easy to spend the day.

The weather was warm and the sun made its appearance. The rain held off and made for a fantastic two-day event.

Thank you to Community 1st Credit Union, Kinney & Sons Excavating & Grading, Inc., Precision Collision Center, Quality Equipment, Inc., RESCO - Ruggles Enterprise Steel Co., Signs & Designs, WEMIGA Waste, and Zeglen Construction for their sponsorship.

Mark your calendars for May 28-29, 2027!



NATIONAL HOMESTEADERS DAY OFFICIALLY ESTABLISHED

August 15 Declared National Homesteaders Day — A Year-Round Storytelling Holiday Focused on Reclaiming Lost Skills, Strong Homes, and Community Resilience

Founded by Dani Murphy, owner of Preppin Mama, with the help of Midwest Old Threshers and Homesteaders of Iowa, National Homesteaders Day is officially being established through National Day Calendar as a new national observance dedicated to self-reliance, heritage skills, and rebuilding stronger homes and communities.

The very first National Homesteaders Day celebration will take place on August 15, 2026, marking the official launch of a nationwide movement organizers are calling the Lost Skills Revival. More than just a one-day observance, National Homesteaders Day is designed to spark year-round storytelling, learning, and community connection as families across the country begin reclaiming the practical skills that once built resilient homes and thriving communities.

The mission is simple: Encourage individuals and families across the country to reclaim one lost skill each year from the Seven Heritage Skills.

From gardening and food preservation to sewing, woodworking, baking, bartering, and community-building, the movement focuses on restoring the practical knowledge and traditions that once created resilient households, connected neighborhoods, and thriving local communities.

“What was common knowledge just three generations ago is quickly disappearing,” said Murphy. “National Homesteaders Day is about reclaiming what was lost — not out of fear or nostalgia, but because these skills still matter. What was once considered old-fashioned is now becoming essential. They create confidence, resilience, connection, and stronger communities.”

The movement is built around three core pillars: Gather, Equip, Sustain. The movement believes that all lost skills can be found in one of the “Seven Heritage Skills”: Grow, Make, Mend, Preserve, Build, Gather, and Community.

Supporters are encouraged to visit the official website to:

- Learn about the Seven Heritage Skills
- Take the pledge to reclaim one lost skill
- Share their stories and progress
- Access educational resources and community connections
- Follow the ongoing Lost Skills Revival movement

The official pledge invites people of all backgrounds — whether experienced homesteaders or complete beginners — to commit to learning and preserving practical skills that strengthen homes and communities for future generations.

Founding Sponsors of National Homesteaders Day include Midwest Old Threshers and Homesteaders of Iowa.



For more information, to take the pledge, or to follow the movement online, visit:

www.nationalhomesteadersday.com Follow National Homesteaders Day on:

Facebook: National Homesteaders Day

Instagram: National Homesteaders Day YouTube:

National Homesteaders Day Google Search:

“NationalHomesteaders Day”

The advertisement is a vertical poster for "The Golden Slipper Saloon". At the top, the title "The Golden Slipper SALOON" is written in a stylized, yellow and white font. Below the title, a group of about 15 people in colorful, historical-style costumes are posed in front of a saloon entrance. The text below the image reads: "JOIN US. GEAR UP. MAKE MEMORIES!". Further down, it says: "THE GOLDEN SLIPPER SALOON GROUP IS LOOKING FOR ENTHUSIASTIC, DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS WHO SHARE A PASSION FOR MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS AND WANT TO BE PART OF ANOTHER EXCITING REUNION SEASON." Below that, it states: "OUR GROUP PERFORMS MULTIPLE SHOWS THROUGHOUT ALL FIVE DAYS OF THE REUNION. PERFORMERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING THEIR OWN COSTUMES AND ACCESSORIES." The final line of text says: "IF YOU LOVE OLD THRESHERS, ENJOY SINGING, DANCING, AND MAKING LASTING MEMORIES WITH GREAT PEOPLE, WE WOULD LOVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT WITH YOU ABOUT JOINING OUR GROUP." At the very bottom, it says: "PLEASE TEXT JULIE AT 319-572-2278 FOR MORE INFORMATION."

ANNOUNCEMENTS



We are proud to honor Jeff & Sherri McPheron as the 2026 Harvest Day Parade Grand Marshals.

Their dedication, support, and commitment to the Old Threshers community have helped keep the traditions of the Reunion strong for generations. We are excited to celebrate them as they lead the Harvest Day Parade during the 2026 Midwest Old Threshers Reunion in Mount Pleasant.



We're proud to announce that Midwest Old Threshers has won our **THIRD DAMMY Award for Best Dam Tourist Attraction!**

This doesn't happen without all of you—our volunteers, exhibitors, sponsors, and every guest who walks through the gates and keeps this tradition alive. From the steam engines to the memories made each year... this award belongs to YOU.

Thank you for helping us keep history running strong. Here's to making it four.



REUNION Camping

Reunion camping means convenience, community, and early entry to the fun. Reserve ahead for 30-amp, 50-amp, or full-service sites.

- \$400 30 Amp & \$480 50 Amp Services
- \$720 Full Service Hookup (Gravel Pad, Sewer, Water, and 50-amp service)

To Reserve Call: **+319-385-8937** For more info visit our website: www.oldthreshers.com

DON CARLSON MEMORIAL HORSE PULL
SEPTEMBER 2 • 7 PM

MIDWEST OLD THRESHERS
MT. PLEASANT, IOWA

THE SAGA OF TROLLEY 381...SO FAR

By Wes Bender

Midwest Electric Railway (MER) Car 381 was included in the very last order (1930) of ten streetcars from the Perley A. Thomas Car Works, of High Point, North Carolina. They were bought by the city of Knoxville, Tennessee. The cars were used there until they were replaced by buses in 1947. Then, three of those Thomas Streetcars were purchased from Knoxville, in 1948, by Waterloo, Iowa, to replace some of their very old streetcars. The railway company, in Waterloo, removed a lot of the control mechanisms and reconfigured the entrance doors on those cars. They also painted the cars "Traction Orange" and Cream and the three cars went to work in interurban service to the eight-mile run to Cedar Falls.

In the 50s there were two separate fires and each fire destroyed two of the Thomas Cars. By 1955, Car 381, was the sole working streetcar and there was daily use to Cedar Falls. On July 31st, 1958, Waterloo's streetcar ended forever, it was the very last streetcar to operate in Iowa.

Waterloo then kept 381 and placed it on display for the public to enjoy. Unfortunately, it was in the Cedar River floodplain plus the parks department didn't take good care of the display and by 1972 it looked a wreck after the weather and vandals had their way with it. That is when Waterloo resident and MER Volunteer, James Levis, approached Waterloo City fathers and made an agreement to transfer ownership to Old Threshers. The Car was taken to Mason City and the Iowa Terminal Railroad, where a crew made repairs. It was then hauled to the MER in 1973 where it ran during reunions until 2016 when a motor failed.

Since then, the complete floor, trucks and motors were rebuilt and the wiring was replaced. There is much more to go. We all at the MER are counting the days until it is back on the line again.



MULTI-DAY ADMISSION

SALE

ENDS MAY 31ST

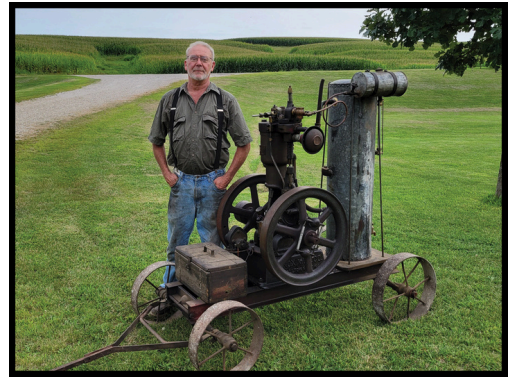
SHOP.OLDTHRESHERS.COM



FEATURED FOR 2026



1949 Minneapolis Moline GTB
Owned by: Logan Christe of
Mount Pleasant, IA



Early 1900s Lennox Vertical
Owned by: Jerry Balvin of Chelsea, IA



1968 Minneapolis Moline 114
Owned by: Clayton Jenkins of Hamilton, IL



1955 Chrysler New Yorker
Deluxe St. Regis
Owned by:
Dick & Fran McElhinney of
Morning Sun, IA



1923 REO Fire Truck
Owned by Mark and Laurie Hemen
New London, IA



1919 Port Huron 19-65 HP
Owned by: The Rob Nelson
Family of Lockridge, IA



2026 Featured Horse
"Belgian"

OT FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

By Alan Elgar and Barry Tuller

A successful enterprise like Old Threshers needs a strong foundation. And it has had one for 40 years now in the Old Threshers Foundation.

The official start of the Foundation was the signing of the articles of incorporation on January 30th, 1986, which were filed the next day with the Iowa Secretary of State's office. The articles made clear that there is a strong tie to Old Threshers from the Foundation. Creating the Foundation was the realization of a long time dream of the Old Threshers board and many of the supporters of Old Threshers.

The dedication of the Midwest Old Threshers Memorial Plaque on May 29, 1983, was an earlier step towards this dream. The Memorial Plaque was sponsored by the family of A.B. and May Anderson as a memorial to their parents. Names are added to the plaque through memorial gifts to remember those that have had an impact on Old Threshers. At the time the Memorial Plaque was created, the hope was that it would be the start towards a workable trust to fund projects for the future.

The July 3, 1985 meeting of the Old Threshers board included a discussion of potentially forming a foundation. Tom Vilsack was present for the discussion and volunteered his time to set it up. A Future Committee was formed in December 1985, charged with working with Tom on the possibilities of a foundation. The four members of this Future Committee, Steve Pacha, David Timmerman, Robert Welander, and Louis Tuller, would be the signers on the articles of incorporation.

The original board for the Foundation, as designated in the articles, consisted of Virgil Coonrod, Steve Pacha, David Timmerman, Barry Tuller, Robert Welander, and Charles Wendel. The first meeting of the board was held on March 24, 1986. The original By-Laws of the Foundation were approved, the budget was set, and fundraising was discussed. The initial officers were elected: Pacha – President, Tuller – VP, Welander – Treasurer, and Wendel – Secretary.



Paul Anderson was an outstanding volunteer and supporter of Old Threshers. With the creation of the Foundation, he became the Development Officer, and took on the task of managing the Foundation and helping with fundraising. Paul served the Foundation for over 25 years until his passing in 2011.

A booth for the Foundation was set up in the museum at Reunion time, near the Memorial Plaque and other special displays. The booth was staffed by board members, family, and friends, who talked to visitors about the Foundation and accepted donations. Virgil Coonrod was quite the fundraiser in the early years. Virgil used the power of a covered cake pan to bring donations from others. If he had a steam engine part that someone wanted, he would tell them it would cost a donation to the Foundation. His cake pan was always full and topped anything the booth could raise!

The Foundation endowment fund got a major source of funding early, with the transfer of \$40K from the E.A. Hayes Zephyr Trust Fund. Over 140 individuals and firms made donations to the Foundation in its first fiscal year, bringing the total fund to \$52,958 by Oct 31, 1986. First year earnings came to \$959, which would be transferred to Old Threshers. Lennis Moore, OT Administrator, proposed an exhibit for the museum, "Water, Too Little, Too Much", to use these funds. It was an important and visible project to showcase the Foundation's impact for the future.

The Foundation board stayed at the original six members through 1988. At the annual meeting in 1988, two were added to the board, Dean Hicks and Robert Mendenhall. Lany Elgar joined the board in 1993. Four more joined the board in 1995: Joyce Dennison, Alan Buckert, Audrey Dodds and Jim Kinney. Many of the



OT FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 40 YEARS cont.

early board members served on the Foundation for decades, guiding its growth.

The early years of the Foundation coincided with the building of many of the iconic displays in the museums. Deciding which projects to fund was the responsibility of the Foundation board, who picked from the proposed projects to determine allocation. The Foundation board prioritized visible projects, to help build an awareness of the Foundation and drive fund raising. The Wilkie Machine Tool Shop, Electricity Comes to the Farm, American Farm Implements, and Marvin Mill are examples of exhibits that were funded and aided the growth of the museums. The Foundation provided funding for the purchase of the Carousel and its building, restoration of the 320 trolley car, and multiple Log Village buildings projects.

A major donation came to the Foundation in April 1997 with a will bequest from C. Frederick Strong for a farm in Illinois. Farm rent greatly increased the money available to be awarded to Old Threshers for projects. After more than twenty years managing the farm asset, it was sold to allow for heirs to reacquire the family farmstead. The farm property grew substantially in value over that time, and the sale proceeds made a lasting impact to the endowment.

The original purpose of the Foundation, still true today, was to “provide funding for planned capital improvements at Midwest Old Threshers.”

From its modest beginnings, the endowment has grown exponentially to \$4.8 million dollars today through many contributions and careful investing. The principal was never to be touched. The earnings are to be used annually to fund projects for Old Threshers. Over the 40 years, those earnings have amounted to \$2,468,053 and used to fund 165 projects.

Each year the Foundation board determines a percentage of the total endowment to be contributed to Old Threshers. In recent years the amount is usually around \$150,000. The decision of what projects to use the funds on is now up to the Old Threshers board.

The projects funded by the Foundation over the years have been both large and small. Large projects

have included new buildings, such as the Food Pavilion, Trading Post and Santa House. Others have been large but not so obvious, like paying for new roofs on many buildings. Small but noticeable ones have included beautifying the grounds and adding better signage. In 2020, Foundation support enabled Old Threshers to survive the year of Covid with no Reunion. This year the funds are being used for two much needed new restroom buildings on the grounds.

Over the forty years, projects have touched every area of the Reunion. You can see the impact of the Foundation in: the Log Village, North Village, gas engines, steam engines, stationary steam, antique cars, tractors, trolleys, museum exhibits, doll collection, Printer’s Hall, campground expansion and improvements, ground trains, electrical upgrades, and new speaker system. The list goes on.

The Foundation has succeeded largely because it has had continuity with three outstanding executive directors over the forty years. Paul Anderson was the first, and he served for 25 years from 1986-2011. He was followed by Alan Huisinga, who served for ten years from 2012-2022. And the current executive director since 2022 is Melinda Huisinga.

Contributions today can be made in either of two ways. Anyone can give to the endowment and help assure the earnings will support many future projects. Or you can donate directly to an individual project of your choice. Or you can always play Bingo in Museum B, where half the proceeds go to the Foundation and you might win something too!

We're looking for Volunteers

Scan Me

or Call 319-385-8937 to start volunteering

WHAT IS IT? WHERE IS IT?

A.



B.



C.



D.



E.



F.



A.) School House in the Log Village. B.) Step on a Wood Brothers traction steam engine. C.) Firehose in the Rural Fire Department exhibit in Heritage Museum B. D.) Globe atop the gas pump in Heritage Museum B. E.) Marker light on the side of a caboose of the Midwest Central Railroad. F.) Part of the rocker support assembly of the carousel.

IN MEMORIAM

Randy Belknap

Randy L. Belknap age 68 of North Liberty died of complications of liver cancer on January 5, 2026.

Randall Lynn Belknap was born December 2, 1957, in Vinton, Iowa the son of Duane and Monica (Kaestner) Belknap. Randy graduated from Clear Creek High School with the Class of 1976. For many years he was employed by Hawkeye Foods as a driver, mechanic and safety director. Following his years at Hawkeye, he owned RB's Small Engine Service in North Liberty and during retirement got back into farming, planting and caring for the 10 acres of his home and helping his uncle Darrell Kaestner and cousins Jon Kaestner at their farm.

In 1984, Randy married Joan Alt Beers in North Liberty. Together they raised their daughter, Emily, eventually building a log house with a pond near North Liberty. Randy was athletic and active his whole life, enjoying recreational sports, camping, farming and Hawkeye sports, as well as being a life-long Green Bay Packers fan. Randy enjoyed working with wood and made many pieces of furniture for their home and for others. After retirement, Randy became involved with both the Muscatine County Fair and the Old Threshers Association, where he and Joan found new close friends and hours of fun. They became active volunteers, helping with school tours and swap meets in addition to showing working engines. He received a volunteer of the year award in 2024. He was happiest when tinkering with a gas engine or restoring and using antiques and farm equipment. Making ice-cream with a gas engine was a favorite activity.

Randy is survived by his wife, Joan; their daughter, Emily Beers Frascaroli (Stefano); brother Jim Belknap (Deb); also survived by many much-loved aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, and one great-great niece and nephew.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Duane and Monica Belknap and his in-laws, Joe and Agda Alt. Memorial donations can be made to Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers

Association or Muscatine County Fair Heritage Hall. To share a thought, memory or condolence please visit Gay & Ciha Funeral and Cremation Service website @ www.gayandciha.com.

Stephen Burden

Stephen Burden, 67, of rural Mount Union died January 6, 2026, at the Southeast Iowa Regional Hospice House in West Burlington. Stephen was born October 31, 1958, in Mount Pleasant, the son of Robert F. and Patricia J. (Mathews) Burden. He graduated from Mount Pleasant High School in 1977. Stephen attended the University of Iowa, then later on attended Indian Hills Community College and received a degree in Robotics and Automation. On December 14, 1985, Stephen was united in marriage to Dianna Wagner in Denmark, Iowa. He began working for local farmers, then a seed company, worked on cars and Kubota tractors for Jerry and Doris Boeddeker, then for Arlo Raid Scrap. He worked for 25 years at Henry County Health Center as maintenance, bio-med technician and boiler operator. He then worked at Mount Pleasant Water Treatment Plant, followed by COBO in Burlington. He went on to be a boiler operator at Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility, worked for West Liberty Foods, then Sigma in Mount Pleasant before retiring.

Stephen and Dianna were former members of New London Christian Church and current members of Harmony Bible Church in Danville, where Stephen was very active. He volunteered in all aspects at Midwest Old Threshers along with Midwest Central Railroad, and City Hope.

Stephen is survived by his wife Dianna; daughter Corliss Burden (Tyler Blind) of New London; sister Jane Burden; and many other family members.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and his brother Paul Robert Burden.

Memorial contributions may be directed to Harmony Bible Church and Southeast Iowa Regional Hospice House. The Olson-Yoder Funeral Home & Crematory is caring for Stephen and his family.

Larry Raid

Larry John Raid (86) of Denmark, Iowa, died peacefully at home January 9, 2026 after surviving 10 years with dementia.

Larry was born March 18, 1939 in Fairfield, Iowa the son of Arlo J. and Leontina D. (Schlecht) Raid. On May 28, 1966 he married Mary Elizabeth Petsche at St. Alphonsus Church in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

Larry graduated from Denmark Academy High School in 1957. He then attended Bluffton College in Ohio for two years and was inducted into their football Hall of Fame as "Rocky." In 1962 he graduated from Northeast Missouri State Teachers College (Truman State University) with a Bachelor's of Science in Industrial Education. After graduation he returned to Denmark to found Pry Plastics Incorporated.

On the night of July 17, 1964, by a stroke of luck, Larry met Louis Armstrong, and by a stroke of fate, he also met his future wife, Mary Petsche. Together, Mary and Larry built their family and community in Denmark. Larry served as volunteer fireman, coached softball and little league, and operated Pry Plastics for 55 years. He and Mary traveled with their children across the United States teaching them about the world. Larry found no greater joy than helping others discover and learn.

Larry led a big life. Owning a short line railroad, patenting a cap rack, collecting and showing antique gas engines, and establishing Linotype University, an annual pilgrimage for printers from around the world, there was not a person or machine he would not befriend. His impact on this earth will be forever felt from the thousands of bookmarks he printed, the hand he was always willing to lend, and for the cards he would

IN MEMORIAM

endlessly play with his children and grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife, Mary; his children, Michelle (Barry) Tuller, John (Linda) Raid, Laura (Chad) Witthoeft; his grandchildren, Zachary (Christine Isaguirre) and Rachel Tuller, Ethan and Jenna Raid, Elizabeth, Anna and, David Witthoeft; one sister, Kay Gingrich; two sisters-in-law, Margaret Petsche and Janet (Tom) Erickson.

He was preceded in death by his parents; five brothers-in-law, Marvin Gingrich and Eugene, Donald, William and Neil Petsche; two nephews, Troy and Tod Gingrich.

Memorials have been established for the Midwest Old Threshers Foundation and Denmark Academy Fund.

The Raid Family would like to thank Southeast Iowa Regional Hospice. A special thanks to Phyllis Hinds, RN, for her care of Larry.

Wayne Johnson

Wayne Edward Johnson, 76, of Danville, died February 1, at his daughter's home in Saint James, Missouri. He was born in Burlington on May 23, 1949 to Cecil R. and Patricia M. Schaefer Johnson. He married Diana "Dee" Ruth McCabe on July 26, 1968 in Middletown, Iowa. She died February 20, 2025.

His family moved from Burlington to Kahoka, Missouri, then back to Danville when he was a child. Wayne attended school in Revere, Missouri and Danville. He was a member of West Burlington Christian Church and New London Christian Church.

He worked at Lehigh Leopold in West Burlington until they closed in 1990. He then got his CDL, and worked for Single Source, CRST-Cedar Rapids, and Ruan-Hon from which he retired, and was very proud that he achieved a Million-mile safety award. He also worked at Phelps Field Tile Company in New London. Wayne was an excellent woodworker and proudly built their family dining room table. He was a member of the Moose and Lions Clubs; in the 1970s was a TroupMaster for Boy Scouts;

volunteered at Old Threshers Main Ground and Campground since he was sixteen years old; enjoyed camping with his wife; being with his family; and Cardinals baseball. He loved fishing, enjoyed watching the cardinals, grew beautiful roses and, since moving to his daughter's in Missouri, he loved sitting on her front porch watching the cars go by, listening to the windchimes and watching the birds in the birdhouses. He enjoyed watching Grit TV, reading Louis L'Amour books; very much enjoyed his Danville coffee group and never knew a stranger.

Survivors include his sons Michael Johnson of Austin, Texas and Joshua (Brandi) Johnson of Burlington; daughters Michelle (Troy) Warth of St. James, Missouri and Johanna Hand of Clarksville, Tennessee; nineteen grandchildren; twelve great-grandchildren; brothers Terry Johnson of Bible Grove, Missouri and Harry Johnson of Downing, Missouri; sister Sharon (Neil) Cornwell of Winfield, Iowa; nieces, nephews and a host of friends. He was preceded in death by his wife; parents; and brother Van Johnson.

Memorials have been established for Be There Ministries in Ethiopia and New London Christian Church. Online condolences may be left at www.elliottfuneralchapel.com.

Paul Sylvester

Paul John Sylvester, a retired electrical engineer, train and trolley buff and musician, died February 8, in hospital, two-and-a-half months after being diagnosed with a rare, aggressive form of cancer. He was 71.

Paul began his professional career as an electrical engineer with the Polaroid Corp. One of a group of then-recent college graduates, he designed circuits and hardware for several Polaroid cameras. He holds at least one patent for his work there.

A Reading resident for 45 years,

he also worked for different companies on medical ultrasounds devices, vehicle safety technology and government security projects.

He became a train and trolley enthusiast much earlier, working summers during college with his father, the late Ernest Sylvester, at the locomotive maintenance shop for commuter rail engines at Harmon, NY.

He then attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a combined bachelor's and master's engineering and computer science degree program.

After college, in 1978, he married his classmate from Ossining (NY) High School, Nadine Wandzilak. They have a son, Mark Sylvester, of Reading.

In the early 2000s, Paul and Mark both began to volunteer at the Seashore Trolley Museum in Kennebunk, ME. Mark continues to volunteer there. And for the last 20-plus years, Paul and Mark have been attending an end-of-summer farming event in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa to help repair and run trolleys that move fair-goers around the fair campground.

Musically, for a number of years before he became ill, Paul played saxophone with the North Reading Community Band. More than 30 years ago he played keyboards in several wedding bands, including "Diversion," and informally with friends.

Since he retired several years ago, Paul had worked part-time at Smolak Farm in N. Andover as a tractor driver for hayrides, a docent and a builder and repairman.

He is survived by his sister, Elaine Sylvester, of Peekskill, NY, in addition to his wife and son.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Dale & Vivian Sparks and Harold & Virgie Wood, his father, John Sparks, Sr. and father-in-law, William Buckwalter.

Gifts can be made to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, PO Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284-9168, by phone to 1-800-525-4669, or at www.dana-farber.org/give in Paul's name.

Memorials may be made to Johnny

IN MEMORIAM

Spark's Children's Educational Fund.

Pallbearers: Nathan Sparks, Billy Porter, Johnny Buckwalter, Phillip Whataker, Jeremiah Goings, Cyrus Sparks and Justin Hudson.

Honorary Pallbearers: Patrick "P.J." Sparks, Jake Buckwalter and Dennis Mayer.

John Dale Sparks Jr.

John Dale "Johnny" Sparks, Jr., 48 of rural Lewistown, Missouri passed away March 31, 2026, surrounded by his wife and kids at his home in rural Lewistown.

The son of John D. and Emma L. Wood Sparks, Sr. was born on July 16, 1977 at St. Mary's Hospital in Quincy, Illinois.

He was united in marriage to Traci Buckwalter on August 21, 2004 at the Assembly of God Church in Ewing, Missouri.

Johnny was a member of the Ewing First Assembly of God Church Board, Lewis County C-1 School Board, North River Old Iron Club and the Midwest Electric Railway at Old Threshers in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. He and Traci co-owned and operated JS Wood Trucking and thoroughly enjoyed taking his kids trucking. He also enjoyed gardening and spending time with his kids playing board games, fishing and mushroom hunting. Johnny never knew a stranger and wanted everyone to see his garden growing and to know Jesus was his savior.

He is survived by his wife, Traci Sparks; his children, Patrick, Patience, Promise and Priscilla Sparks; his mother, Emma (Marvin) Schrecke; mother-in-law, Sharon Buckwalter; grandmother, Mildred Wood; brother, Nathan (Jessi) Sparks; sister-in-law, Tami (Billy) Porter; brothers-in-law, Johnny Buckwalter and Jake Buckwalter; nieces, Lauren, Taylor, Rylee and Paislee Porter, Amelia, Sparks and Camrie Buckwalter; and several aunts, uncles & cousins.

Paul R. Willits

Paul R. "Bob" Willits, 96, of Mount Pleasant, passed away May 2, 2026, at his home at Addington Place. Bob was born April 20, 1930, in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, the son of C. Robert and Selma Long Willits. He graduated from Pleasant Lawn High School in 1947 and later attended Iowa Wesleyan College. On March 29, 1958, he married Ruth Carolyn Whitham. She died January 18, 2021.

He was a lifelong farmer, self-employed until his retirement in 1991. Bob also proudly served in the U.S. Army National Guard from 1950 to 1958.

He is survived by his daughter, Deb Sianchuk and her husband Curtis of Missoula, Montana; three grandchildren, Max Sianchuk, Brad Willits and Erica Willits; six great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Ruth; son Stephen; sister Janet Gordon; half-brother J.T. Willits; half-sister Elin Bennett; and other extended family members.

Memorials have been established for EveryStep Hospice and the Midwest Old Settlers and Threshers Association. Elliott Chapel, New London, is assisting the family and online condolences may be left at www.elliottfuneralchapel.com.

Marcia Lampe

Marcia Lynne Lampe, age 79, loving wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, and dear friend, passed away peacefully late in the evening on April 12, 2026, surrounded by family who loved her deeply. She met the end of her life with remarkable courage, grace, and strength after a long and valiantly fought battle. In her final moments, Marcia was not alone. Family gathered close, holding her hands and bearing witness to the quiet determination and love that defined her throughout her life.

Marcia was born on August 22, 1946, and was adopted by Edward and Mabel (Rowe) Nunnemacher. Her father's profession with car

dealerships moved the family to various states throughout the Midwest, finally settling in Grandview to be closer to family. Marcia attended L-M School, where she met her high school sweetheart, Jerry Lee Lamp.

Following her graduation in 1964, she attended classes at Muscatine Community College. Marcia and Jerry were married on February 27, 1965, beginning a lifelong partnership grounded in love, hard work, and shared purpose. Together, they owned and operated Lamp Feed & Grain for 25 years, where Marcia skillfully took part in every aspect required to run a successful country grain elevator. Her cheerful greetings and welcoming presence helped cement their reputation for providing exceptional customer service to the many customers they served and valued.

Marcia was deeply and civically minded and actively engaged in community events. Providing Christmas gifts to children in need was a passion especially close to her heart. She was a wonderful cook and excelled at coordinating large gatherings, graciously bringing people together. Baking was one of her specialties, and she lovingly made birthday and wedding cakes for family and friends.

Marcia and Jerry delighted in hunting for treasures together at flea markets and antique shops, with her keeping an eye out for vintage carnival chalkware figurines. As a longtime member of the same card club for more than 40 years, she cherished the laughter and friendships built around the table. The Old Threshers Reunion was an annual highlight, where Marcia especially enjoyed camping with Russ and Heather's family and watching them operate their steam engines.

Travel was another joy in Marcia's life, whether exploring the United States or venturing abroad by plane, train, car, bus, or ship. One treasured journey was their visit with Brad and Skip to Chatteris, England, the

IN MEMORIAM

hometown of her grandfather. Over the past 20 years, much of Marcia's time was spent at their Wisconsin cabin, where she happily fed squirrels, foxes, and even an occasional black bear.

Marcia adored her granddaughters, Lydia and Emma Rae, and often volunteered as a chaperone on their grade-school field trips. She rarely missed a ball game, color guard performance, auction or musical event. Preserving memories was important to her—she was seldom without a camera,

quietly capturing moments from behind the lens. Busy as her life was, she also cherished peaceful moments on the front porch, savoring a cup of coffee while listening to the birds.

A loyal member of the Letts United Methodist Church, Marcia never passed up an opportunity to help. She regularly provided homemade ice cream, casseroles, baked goods or anything else needed.

She will be lovingly remembered and deeply missed by her husband, Jerry; her sons, Bradley Lamp and his husband Skip Morrison,

Plymouth, MN, and Russell Lamp and his wife Heather, Letts, IA; her cherished granddaughters, Lydia and Emma Rae; and her sister-in-law, Sally Trimpe. Marcia is also survived by her sister, Gail Burnett, Anaheim, CA, and brother, Randy Burgus, Burlington, IA and cousin and life-long friend, Nancy McGill. She was preceded in death by her parents and sister Carolyn Nelson.

Memorials can be made to Letts United Methodist Church, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or COMPASSUS Hospice.

2026 Calendar of Events

May 26—Heritage Museums | OT Gift Shop open 7 days/week
May 30 —Trolley School
July 4—Mt. Pleasant Community 4th of July Celebration
July 14-20—Henry County Fair
August 7-9—Western Illinois Threshers
August 13-23—Iowa State Fair
August 19—OT Briefing Meeting
August 22—OT Campground Opens
September 2—Harvest Day Parade
September 3-7—2026 Midwest Old Threshers Reunion
September 17-19—Printers' Fair
October 8-10, 15-17, 22-24, 29-31—Thrashers House of Terror
October 16-17, 23-24, 30-31—Haunted Rails
November 14—OT Annual Meeting | Foundation Annual Meeting
November 21-22—Festival of Lights Holiday Light Stroll
November 25-December 31—Festival of Lights

Old Threshers Reunion

Sept. 3 - 7, 2026 * Mount Pleasant, Iowa